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S E C R E T ANKARA 000972

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/23/2015

TAGS: [AM](#) [GG](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY TAKES A SMALL STEP IN DEALING WITH ARMENIA

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11.](#) (C) Summary: The Turkish MFA is moving responsibility for official communication with the Government of Armenia from its Embassy in Moscow to its Embassy in Tbilisi. MFA portrays this as a pragmatic response to increased travel between Turkey and Armenia through Georgia. In substance, Turkish-Armenian relations are at a standstill, with no further working-level talks on the horizon. However, the shift could facilitate bilateral communication. End Comment.

[12.](#) (C) On March 1, the MFA will move responsibility for official communication with the Government of Armenia from its Embassy in Moscow to its Embassy in Tbilisi. MFA Caucasus Department Head Adali (strictly protect) portrays this as a pragmatic step, in view of increased numbers of Turks and Armenians traveling through Georgia. According to Adali, increased travel between Turkey and Armenia via Georgia has spawned a burgeoning consular caseload and a number of legal issues.

[13.](#) (C) Adali noted wryly the move will "displease a certain large country" -- clearly referring to Russia. It will also give a key role to Turkey's Ambassador in Georgia Ertan Tezgor, an experienced Caucasus hand who headed the MFA's quiet working-level contacts with Armenian diplomats in 2003 and 2004 until he was named Ambassador to Georgia.

[14.](#) (S) The move to Tbilisi may also facilitate bilateral communication in another way. Tezgor and Adali have both told us the Armenians worry about Russian eavesdropping of their bilateral communications even in Yerevan; for this reason, the Armenians preferred to hold bilateral talks in Vienna instead of their own capital when it was their turn to host. The move to Tbilisi could respond to the same Armenian concern about Moscow.

[15.](#) (S) Adali hinted that the next step forward in relations could be accrediting Turkey's Ambassador in Georgia to Yerevan. However, he held out no prospect that this will happen soon and gave no indication of what circumstances would justify such a move.

[16.](#) (C) In substance, Turkish-Armenian relations are at a standstill. Adali told us there are no plans in the foreseeable future for resumption of working-level meetings. The last such meeting was in August 2004. The MFA is still upset over what it views as President Kocharian's efforts to inject relations with Armenia into the December EU Summit decision over Turkey's candidacy and his perceived insult to Turkey's European vocation. Adali told us he met earlier this month in Ankara with a working-level Armenian diplomat (NFI) to reiterate Turkey's concerns.

[17.](#) (C) Adali is pinning hopes for improved Turkish-Armenian relations on future talks between Armenian and Azeri FMs. Adali predicted Turkey would respond to any Armenian withdrawal from the occupied territories, even without any move on Nagorno-Karabakh.

[18.](#) (C) Comment: The shift to Tbilisi is a small step; we see little likelihood of any substantive change on the Turkish side in the near future. However, if only in geography, it is a small step in the right direction. End Comment.

EDELMAN